

# Positive Thinking among Internet Users in Saudi Arabia and Its Relationship with the Subjective Feeling of Well-being

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## Abstract

This research was carried out to investigate the relationship between positive thinking and the subjective feeling of well-being that the Internet users may encounter when browsing the different web sites and communicating through social net working. To fulfill the objectives of this research, the researchers used the descriptive correlation methodology to design the present study. The sample was selected based on stratified random sampling technique and (460) participants were tested: (30) for pilot study and (430) subjects represent the research sample including both citizens and residents in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with their demographic characteristics such as age, education, nationality and occupation. The instruments for data collection primarily included the following: positive thinking scale which was available on line and Oxford happiness inventory. Both instruments were adapted to suit the research sample. The collected data were statistically analyzed by using SPSS through the following statistical tests: T-test for one sample, Alpha Chronbach formula, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results indicated that the Internet users scored significantly high on positive thinking scale, there was a significant negative correlation between positive thinking and well-being, and the scores on well-being scale were significantly higher among the internet users.

## Keywords

*Positive Thinking; the Internet Users; the Subjective Feeling; Well-being*

## Introduction

Internet has a profound effect on various aspects of our life. Its effects can be compared to that of other modern inventions which came into existence earlier in this century. The rapid evolution of Internet naturally raises questions about both its potential benefits and possible negative consequences. This is especially true for the Internet that has become the fastest growing electronic technology in the world history. It has provided a new medium of information, entertainment and socialization. However, just like

any other technologies, the development of Internet can bring potential problems as well (Nie & Erbring (2000).

Internet users in Saudi community are restricted due to the fact that Saudi Arabian context in which this research is conducted, is sex-segregated and its structure is known for being distinct, ruled by Islamic laws (Sharia), and strongly adherent to traditions, social norms, customs and values (Al-Saggaf, Y (2012), Al-Saggaf & Weckert (2004), Al-Saggaf & Williamson (2004).

It can be said that overall, the Internet is going to benefit Saudi society in the future and advance Saudi culture and support Islamic values unlike the fear of some that will damage the culture and Islamic values. According to Al-Furaih (2002) & Al-Jarf (2004), for Saudi society, to benefit from the Internet in the future, and to avoid some of its negative impacts, the solution lies in education, training and raising people's awareness.

It is worth noting that Internet use may lead to a manner of positive thinking due to the fact that use of the Internet for communicating with the relatives and friends could drastically decrease financial costs of long distance communication. This in turn would allow people to communicate more frequently and effectively (Bargh, J and McKenna, 2004).

At present, the psychology of the Internet use has appeared to deal with the advantages and disadvantages of Internet use; Internet addiction is one of the phenomena that have received a great deal of attention among researchers (Wallace, P.M 1995). It is true that Internet users are increasingly growing with their varying psychological characteristics that are mixed up with the different motives behind using of the Internet.

## Statement of the Research Problem

In Saudi Arabia, public access to Internet was legislated in April, 1997, since then Internet has been spread all over the kingdom of Saudi Arabia with high speed of increase. That naturally brings about a lot of psychosocial problems among Saudi who are known as strict and religious men. Internet use in Saudi community, therefore, raises questions about both its advantages and disadvantages.

It is important for this present research to specify its problem through obtaining the answers to the following questions:

- 1-Were the respondents' scores on positive thinking scale significantly higher?
- 2-Was there any correlation between positive thinking and subjective well-being?
- 3- Were the respondents' scores on happiness scale significantly higher?

## Objectives

Since the Internet was publicly introduced in Saudi Arabia, there was a need to carry out such study to achieve the following objectives:

- 1-To evaluate the effects of Internet use in Saudi Arabia
- 2-To link between internet use and a sense of happiness
- 3-To measure some cognitive aspects connected with Internet users in Saudi community

## The Importance

This research comes in the context of the psychology of Internet use, in this field; many researchers have undertaken efforts to examine the impact of Internet use on humans. And also, what adds to the importance of this research is the fact that many previous researchers have investigated negatives effects of the Internet use, but this current study focuses on positive aspects.

## Hypotheses

Hypotheses in the psychological research are formulated in two ways as far as types of hypotheses are concerned:

- A) Null hypothesis.
- B) Alternative hypothesis.

However, the researcher preferred null hypotheses due to the fact that there was no available literature on the psychological variables of the current research:

1. The scores on positive thinking were slightly high.
2. No statistically significant correlation was found between positive thinking and well-being.
3. The scores on well-being were slightly high.

## Literature Review

### *Positive Thinking and the Internet Use:*

Despite the fact that there was no available theoretical framework as well as literature on positive thinking as a manner of thought in relation to Internet use. The researcher, therefore, attempts to make use of what has obtained regarding positive thinking.

Positive thinking is a manner of thinking that puts emphasis on processing thoughts in a more desirable way. According to Seligman, M. (2006), positive thinking is a mental attitude that admits into the mind thoughts, words, and images that are conducive to growth and success.

According to Seligman, M. (2006), positive thinking is linked to a wide range of health benefits including: longer life span, less stress, low rate of depression, increased physical well-being, and better mental health.

On the other hand, the Internet has provided people with a lot of opportunity to enhance their positive thinking and positive outlook towards life.

The positive thinking theory rests on the assumption that the mind is the source of reality and all thoughts represent a product of this reality. "I think therefore I am", a phrase coined by Rene Descartes. Through this manner of thinking, human beings can evolve into a perfect and enlighten being.

In this respect, the researcher views that the Internet can help its users develop a positive attitude towards positive thinking to achieve mental satisfaction and to discover how people can lead the most productive lives. Positive thinking is thought by most psychologists to be an indicator of a person's mental well-being. This hypothesis finds a direct relationship between positive thinking and individual's well-being.

It should be noted that Cyber psychology can promote positive thinking: through the Internet interaction, people are provided with positive thinking techniques more consciously and systematically (Derks & Bakker, 2010).

Computer in general and the Internet in particular was once developed to organize our life and make it easier, it is necessary, therefore, to believe that there is perhaps a mutual interaction among the Internet use, life style and thinking strategies.

### The Internet Use and the Subjective Feeling of Well-being

The Internet may actually enhance our well-being. In a recent study done in the U.K, there appeared to be a link between feeling happier and using the web. A study was conducted by Michael Wilmot, a social scientist, about the impact of Internet use on people's well-being. It pointed out that searching the World Wide Web (www) had a positive impact on people's well-being by helping them feel empowered. Generally, the British research found that people who had access to the Internet, felt better overall about their lives, a feeling of more control in their lives and an increased sense of freedom are strong correlations to feeling happier (Diener, E.1994).

As people are spending more time online, it is important to evaluate the impact of Internet use on individual well-being. Given the increasingly prominent role the Internet plays in people's daily life, understanding its influence on individual well-being is crucial. But this issue has received limited attention from researchers (Weiser, E.2001).

There are many reasons why Internet use can bring about a feeling of well-being. First and foremost, the Internet gives access to a wide range of application and services that provide a sense of psychological well-being (Hong, 2007).

Many online services are related to entertainment or leisure activities that are a source of enjoyment. Another reason to support the positive effect of the Internet use on happiness is the fact that many Internet services such as social network and email have the characteristics of recreations that are enjoyed only when they are shared with friends (Unlaner, 1989). As happiness increases the consumption of these services (Bruni and Stanca, 2008; Gui and Stanca, 2010), the Internet use could have a positive effect on a subjective feeling of well-being among its users if it rises the time dedicated to entertainment. In the same manner, the Internet is a means of building and maintaining social relations which is another source of a feeling of well-being (Franzen, 2003; Penard and Poussing, 2010; Shklovski, Kiesler and Kraut 2006). Individual can enjoy face-to-face interaction with their family and

friends. They can also interact online with people they have never met before and make new friendship (Ellison et al, 2007). Thus, generating more well-being as social interaction is considered as a main influential factor of happiness.

Another reason to presume a positive relation between Internet use and a feeling of well-being is that at present having access to the Internet is perceived as a norm in developed countries. No Internet users could feel isolated or socially excluded, this feeling may have negative effects on their overall happiness.

Never the less, few studies have investigated the impact of the Internet on well-being, Kavetsos and Koutroumpis (2010), studied the impact of information technology on subjective well-being, using a cross-sectional data of European countries. They found that having an Internet connection at home is associated with higher levels of well-being and living in a country with a high rate of Internet users improves life satisfaction as well.

### Methodology & Procedures

The researcher used the descriptive correlation method to design this research.

### Participants

The sample of this research was drawn on the basis of stratified random sampling technique. The sample size was (430) respondents, in addition to (30) subjects were for pilot study. All the demographic characteristics of the selected sample are shown on the following table.

TABLE 1 SHOWS THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE:

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std.Deviation
<b>Gender</b>			1.34	.4771
Males	280	65.2		
females	150	34.8		
<b>Occupation</b>			1.27	.4507
Teaching	314	0.73		
others	116	0.27		
<b>Education</b>			1.65	.4771
Graduate	150	0.35		
postgraduate	280	0.65		
<b>Nationality</b>			2.37	1.13
Saudi	135	0.31		
Sudanese	90	0.21		
Egyptian	114	0.27		
Indian	91	0.21		
<b>Age</b>			34.99	5.60

These demographic variables can be displayed in the following figures:

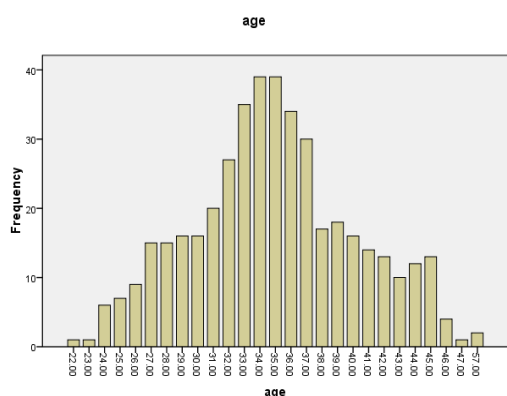


FIG. 1 SHOWS AGES OF INTERNET USERS IN SAUDI ARABIA

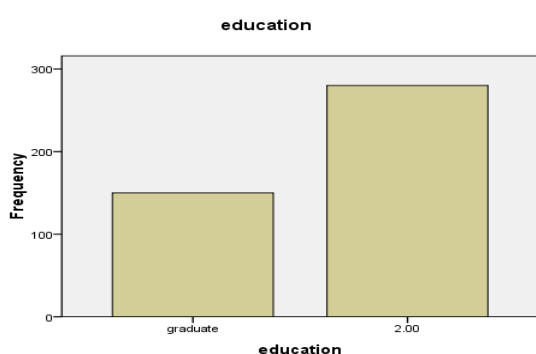


FIG. 2 SHOWS EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF INTERNET USERS IN SAUDI ARABIA:

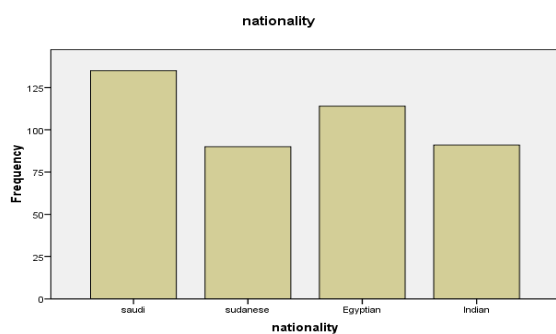


FIG. 3 SHOWS NATIONALITIES OF INTERNET USERS IN SAUDI COMMUNITY



FIG. 4 SHOWS OCCUPATIONS OF INTERNET USERS IN SAUDI ARABIA

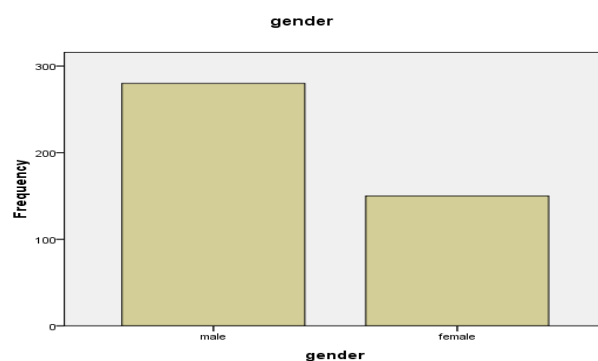


FIG. 5 SHOWS GENDER VARIABLE

### Instruments

Instruments of data collection included the following:

(1) Positive Thinking Scale: It is (28) items, made available on line (Appendix-(1).

(2)Oxford Happiness Inventory: for measuring the subjective feeling of well-being (Appendix-(2).

The researcher adapted the scales to suit the present study. Firstly: internal consistency was obtained for both scales as follows:

### Internal Consistency of Positive Thinking Scale

The researcher administered the scale to (30) subjects as a pilot study and then used Alpha Cronbach formula to obtain the reliability of scale as displayed on the following table.

TABLE 2 SHOWS CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR EACH ITEM ON POSITIVE THINKING SCALE

Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation
1	.878	11	.874	21	.883
2	.875	12	.882	22	.881
3	.887	13	.881	23	.871
4	.880	14	.876	24	.877
5	.876	15	.874	25	.880
6	.876	16	.873	26	.885
7	.876	17	.882	27	.873
8	.877	18	.874	28	.880
9	.878	19	.875		
10	.878	20	.878		

Reliability = 0.882    Validity = $\sqrt{0.882}$ =0.939

**Internal Consistency of Oxford Happiness Inventory**

The researcher adopted the same procedure done with the above mentioned scale. The following table displays the procedure.

TABLE 3 SHOWS CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR EACH ITEM ON OXFORD HAPPINESS INVENTORY

Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation
1	.832	9	.814
2	.839	10	.820
3	.831	11	.853
4	.834	12	.837
5	.834	13	.829
6	.830	14	.822
7	.834	15	.826
8	.831	16	.824

Reliability =0.840 Validity = $\sqrt{0.840}$ =0.916

**Conclusion:** Both scales as instruments for data collection were reliable and valid for the current research.

**Data Collection Process**

The researcher adopted the quantitative data collection procedures, relying on random sampling and structured data collection instruments which included paper-pencil-questionnaires. Face validity for psychometric data collection devices was made by some experts who were consulted by the researcher. There was initial administration of the instruments on a pilot sample to obtain their reliability and validity. The researcher employed probability sampling to select participants randomly .The total sample size was

(430) participants who were regular Internet users for different purposes and from different places. Participants were more honest while responding to questionnaires. The participants were requested to complete the questionnaires and handed in as quickly as possible for analysis.

The collected data for the present research were analyzed statistically by using SPSS, and the following statistical tests were used:

1. Alpha Cronbach formula.
2. One-sample T-test.
3. Pearson's correlation coefficient.

**Results & Discussion**

In this section, the researcher displays the result of each hypothesis with its discussion.

**Hypothesis (1)**

It predicted that Internet users' scores were slightly high on positive thinking scale and the result in the following table.

Mean and Standard Deviation obtained=(1.121), (17.163) respectively. Therefore, the scores on positive thinking were significantly high at(.000) level .

**Discussion**

Theoretically, the researcher pointed out the various cognitive aspects that the Internet users can obtain through browsing the different web sites and social networking. What can be added in this respect, is the fact that during work hours-for example-one may need spending less time relaxing with the Internet, therefore, with no Internet Connection there will be no capacity to think positively at work.

TABLE 4 SHOWS THE RESULT OF ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST TO IDENTIFY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCORES:

	Test Value = 46					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
	79.864	429	.000	66.104	64.477	67.731

TABLE 6 SHOWS ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST TO VERIFY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCORES:

	Test Value = 26					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
	86.883	429	.000	37.883	37..021	38.745

On positive side of the Internet use, Turkle (1995) contended that participants online are more flexible and open-minded in their thinking. Related to this issue, is the observation that individuals become more self-confident as in Markham's (1998) study.

### Hypothesis (2)

TABLE 5 SHOWS PEARSON'S CORRELATION COEFFICIENT TO TEST THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CORRELATION BETWEEN THE TWO VARIABLES:

	Positive Thinking	Well-being
Positive thinking Pearson's correlation	1	-.121
Sig.(2-tailed)	430	430
N		
Well-being Pearson's correlation	-.121	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.012	430
N	430	430

\*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

It hypothesized that there was no significant correlation between positive thinking and subjective feeling of well-being. The result displayed on the following table.

It appeared from the table above that there was a significant negative correlation between positive thinking and well-being.

### Discussion

According to the researcher's own view, despite the fact that there was no available literature to explain this result, it is an important to say that adopting a positive thinking can indeed improve mood and bring on temporary feeling with well being.

### Hypothesis (3)

It speculated that the scores obtained on well-being were slightly high among the participants and the result displayed on the following table 6.

Mean and Standard Deviation obtained= (63.883), (9.087) respectively. Therefore, the scores on well-being were significantly high at(.000) level .

### Discussion

As many researchers believe that access to the Internet has been linked with happiness, the present researcher also agrees with this statement, for example, net chat through Skype or net messaging may cause a feeling of joy and happiness.

This result was in line with the result of a previously conducted research: Research on adult has found that feeling close and connected to others on a daily basis was associated with higher daily well-being, and in particular, feeling understood and appreciated and sharing pleasant interactions were especially strong predictors of well-being (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe & Ryan, 2006).

### Conclusion

Positive thinking is the key to succeed in almost all domains of life, through the Internet, it is possible to provide human mind with valid information media that make people remain in touch with all aspects of life.

Furthermore, the Internet use can help people overcome a feeling of being isolated; this negative feeling may badly affect a person's outlook towards life.

Never the less, some studies have highlighted the disadvantages and negative impact of the Internet use. The Internet will remain a device through which people can approach external world.

### Recommendations

- To provide people with a sufficient counseling for a healthy Internet use.
- To make the most use of time during web sites browsing.
- To teach the young generation the ethics of Internet use.
- To enlighten educational institution with the potential hazards of Internet addiction.
- To find crucial answers to people's questions about information technology.

### Suggestions for Further Studies

More researches are needed to fill the gap in the following areas:

1. Personality traits of the Internet user's .A cross-cultural study.
2. Gender differences in relation to Internet use. A comparative study.
3. The most used web sites among Internet users. a descriptive research.
4. Positive thinking among Internet users, A theoretical framework.
5. The relationship between Internet use and creative thinking. A correlation study.

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## Appendix (1)

Brother/Sister: We are intended to conduct a research titled: Positive thinking among Internet users in Saudi Arabia and its relationship with subjective feeling of well-being.

Please fill in the followings:

First: General Information:

Age (     )                      Educational Level (                      )                      Nationality (                      )

Occupation (                      )                      Gender: male (     )                      female (     )

Secondly:

The following self-rating scale will give you an indication whether you are an overly optimistic & positive person, or whether you tend to look more on the negative side of life. Rate each statement by putting (√) under one of the five alternatives:

No.	Item	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
1	I am responsible for making the most of my life					
2	I am control of my life					
3	I like my self					
4	I get along well with people					
5	I deserve to have what I want					
6	I deserve the best in life					
7	I can have the best in life					
8	I am comfortable with success					
9	I view failure as a learning opportunity					
10	I accept what is out of my control					
11	I can handle rejection					
12	I can handle pain					
13	I am happy to be alive					
14	I do my best... I give life my best shot					
15	I embrace failure as a natural part of life and earning					
16	I have realistic expectations of myself, others, and life					
17	I bring out the best in others					
18	I handle conflict effectively					
19	I accomplish my most important goals					
20	I am comfortable with all my feelings					
21	I am happy about my career prospects					
22	My financial situation satisfies my needs					
23	I consider the best contingency plan when evaluating risks					
24	I make the most of whatever crosses my path					
25	I am where I need to be in my life right now					
26	I like most people I meet					
27	I tend to think I will be even better off in a year's time					
28	I praise partner and family more often than I criticize them					

## Appendix (2)

You are kindly requested to tick ( ✓ ) each statement under one of the five alternatives:

No.	Item	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I am intensely interested in other people					
2	I have very warm feelings toward almost everyone					
3	I find most things amusing					
4	I laugh a lot					
5	I am always committed and involved					
6	I have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life					
7	I find beauty in some things					
8	I feel that I am specially in control of my life					
9	I usually have a good influence on events					
10	I feel able to take anything on					
11	I feel particularly healthy					
12	I feel particularly pleased with the way I am					
13	I think I look attractive					
14	I like most aspects of my personality					
15	People would describe me as a giving person					
16	I feel competent and able to handle life					